

Top Secret 219

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Tuesday 4 October 1977

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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Tuesday, 4 October 1977

The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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USSR: Two New Men in Politburo

25X1 [] The Soviet Party's Central Committee yesterday named two new candidate (non-voting) members of the ruling Politburo: Party Secretary Konstantin Chernenko--a long-time close associate of President Brezhnev--and First Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily Kuznetsov. The appointments are probably related, at least indirectly, to a decision on who is to fill the newly created position of First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium.

25X1 [] Chernenko, 66, was elevated to the party secretariat at the last party congress in the spring of 1976. He has been head of the Central Committee's General Department since mid-1965. In this capacity, he has served as the top executive officer for the Politburo, one of the most politically sensitive assignments in the party apparatus.

25X1 [] Chernenko's association with Brezhnev goes back to the late 1940s when they worked together in the Moldavian Republic. Chernenko went to work in the central party apparatus in Moscow in 1956, presumably at the instigation of Brezhnev, who had just returned to Moscow. Chernenko became Brezhnev's executive aide in the Supreme Soviet administrative apparatus in 1960. He held this post until his assignment to the General Department six months after Brezhnev replaced Khrushchev as party chief.

25X1 [] Kuznetsov, 76, one of the USSR's ablest and most respected diplomats, has a broad background that is unique within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He began his career as a metallurgical engineer, studied at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in the early 1930s, and worked as a laborer at the Ford Motor Company's River Rouge Plant.

25X1 [] By 1940, Kuznetsov had risen to the post of Deputy Chairman of the State Planning Commission. In 1944, he was named chief of the Soviet trade unions. He served briefly as a member of the expanded party Presidium in 1952 but his fortunes hit a temporary snag following Stalin's death. Kuznetsov was dropped from the Presidium and reassigned to the Foreign Ministry as a deputy minister and, for a brief period, served as Ambassador to China.

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[] As First Deputy Foreign Minister, Kuznetsov is considered an expert on US and UN affairs. He has often functioned as a diplomatic trouble-shooter and has frequently served as acting foreign minister during Foreign Minister Gromyko's many absences. He reportedly is next in line should Gromyko retire or be assigned to another post.

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[] The elevation to the Politburo of Kuznetsov and Chernenko is probably related, if only indirectly, to a decision on filling the newly created position of First Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. The person who is appointed to this job will act as Brezhnev's deputy--or "vice president"--and it is possible that either Kuznetsov or Chernenko is slated for the post.

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[] According to the US Embassy in Moscow, a Foreign Ministry official commented yesterday that Kuznetsov most likely would be moving from the Ministry. Another Ministry staffer noted that the "rank and file" of the Ministry is speculating about a new first deputy minister.

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[] It is also possible that Kuznetsov is to replace Gromyko as Foreign Minister, who in turn would be named to the new job. Gromyko has been mentioned in Moscow as a possible choice for the post.

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[] In addition to being relatively old, all three of these men lack the sufficient independent political base necessary to succeed Brezhnev. Thus, the appointment of any one of them to the new post would effectively remove the job from the succession ladder. Younger men, however, are rumored to be under consideration.

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[] The Central Committee plenum probably decided who will get the job, but its decision is not likely to be announced until the Supreme Soviet ratifies the new constitution at the end of this week--and possibly not even then.

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[] The Central Committee session also approved the draft constitution and commissioned Brezhnev to report on the draft and the results of the nation-wide discussion at the session of the Supreme Soviet that begins today. According to the US Embassy, the session will probably close on Friday. The plenum also elevated four candidate-members of the Central Committee to full membership. []

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EUROPE: CSCE Begins in Belgrade

25X1 [] //The follow-up session to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which gets under way today in Belgrade, will review implementation of the commitments the participants made during the Helsinki meeting two years ago, consider ways to expand cooperation between East and West, and attempt to set a date for another review conference.//

25X1 [] //Moscow's main objective will be to resist a detailed review of its compliance with the Final Act and its record on human rights guarantees. The East Europeans are likely to maintain solidarity with the Soviets on the basic issues raised at the conference. The West Europeans will support the US position on key issues, although the allies will seek to avoid an open clash with the USSR.//

25X1 [] //No government seems to be looking forward to the Belgrade meeting, but most believe they can preserve, and possibly expand upon, the existing level of cooperation. The participants are not likely to press their views to the point of hurting East-West relations.//

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[] //The Soviets insist that the meeting should not be turned into a "tribunal" that would pass judgment on how individual signatories have carried out the provisions of the Final Act. Although the Soviets will be unable to prevent a review of implementation on the human rights issue, they will urge that only general discussions be held.//

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[] //The Soviets are unlikely to start trouble at Belgrade but apparently are prepared to retaliate in kind if subjected to detailed criticism on human rights.//

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[] //To a large degree, the East Europeans share Soviet objectives. Solidarity with the Soviets on the basic issues and tactics will probably continue, although Romania and Yugoslavia will act independently on some issues.//

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[] //Highly sensitive and vulnerable to criticism on human rights, all of the East European states are concerned about the negative impact these issues could have on East-West relations and detente in general. They--like the Soviets--favor a short conference and one that will not increase their obligations to respect human rights.//

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[] //The West Europeans join the US in seeking:

--A serious review of the East's record on implementing the Final Act.

--The presentation of some new proposals to maintain the initiative and encourage further detente.

--Another follow-up meeting.//

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[] //The allies support a policy that will encourage human contacts but not burden relations between governments. They want to be aware of the way governments treat their citizens, but they also want to avoid a clash with the USSR.//

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[] //The nine members of the European Community, despite some differences, expect to maintain a common position in an effort to demonstrate that there is indeed West European coordination on defense and security issues. EC members also hope that a common position will help safeguard their interests.//

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[REDACTED] //The allies generally share the Soviet desire for a harmonious meeting. They want any new proposals raised to address only those issues covered by the Final Act, and they are prepared to use the occasion to have discussions of general proposals aimed at improving East-West relation.//

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[REDACTED] //The 13 nonaligned states have served as mediators between East and West. Since Helsinki, their positions seem to be moving closer to those of the Western allies. These countries have a special interest in the military confidence-building measures, in large part because several of them share a border with one or more Eastern countries. A working group at the meeting will examine Mediterranean problems because of the concerns of several of the nonaligned littoral states, and the interest the West Europeans have in expanding relations with them. [REDACTED]

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IRAN: Widespread Cholera Epidemic

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[REDACTED] *Local health officials have been unable to contain a widespread cholera epidemic in Iran. Hardest hit are the transit centers where Muslim pilgrims congregate on their way to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Iranian Government efforts to suppress information on the epidemic increase the risk that the disease*

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will spread further. Ahvaz, a major transportation junction near northern Persian Gulf seaports, and Mashhad, the major Muslim center in northeast Iran, are most likely to bear the brunt as the annual pilgrimage season reaches its peak late next month.

25X1 [] Since July, when cholera first was reported near Hamadan, additional outbreaks have occurred in or near transit centers in many parts of Iran. The center of the epidemic is in the northwest, where health officials have reported more than 1,500 cases--including over 100 that resulted in death. Most of the cases were in the Tehran area.

25X1 [] The unusually high incidence of cholera in Iran is apparently due to the movement of Muslim pilgrims and the failure of the Iranian Government to admit the epidemic potential of the disease. Cholera is endemic to Iran because of inadequate sanitation and hygienic practices in urban areas; the disease spreads chiefly by human carriers.

25X1 [] Until mid-September, Iranian health officials did little to restrict foreign travel or to contain the cholera outbreaks that occurred during the summer. Since then Iran has taken some measures to control cholera. For example, it has refused entry visas to travelers from cholera infected countries. By September cholera had spread from the Turkish and Afghanistan border areas along pilgrim transit routes toward Iraq and the Persian Gulf ports of Khorramshahr, Bander-e Shahpur, and Bandar Abbas.

25X1 [] Iranian officials continue to play down the evidence of a serious epidemic. They only recently acknowledged that deaths, which they formerly attributed to a "cholera-like disease" were, in fact, caused by cholera.

25X1 [] The Iranian government may be concerned about arousing further anxiety among a population already experiencing economic and other problems. []

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INDIA: Mrs. Gandhi Arrested

25X1 [] *The arrest yesterday in New Delhi of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and several members of her former coterie will provoke considerable rhetoric and some demonstrations but will not significantly affect the course of Indian politics.*

25X1 [] Gandhi and the others were arrested on charges of extorting \$13 million from a French firm and for compelling some companies to purchase jeeps for Congress Party political campaigns. The second most powerful man in the cabinet, Home Minister Charan Singh, had vigorously pushed for arresting Gandhi, but in light of Prime Minister Desai's recent statements that Gandhi would not be arrested for political reasons, the government's action at this time was surprising.

25X1 [] The Prime Minister may have changed his mind because of the controversy over the former Prime Minister's increased political activities in recent weeks and the fact that others in the government advocated that she be arrested. The government may also be trying to divert growing criticism over its inability to pull itself together and devise an economic strategy. Other former members of Gandhi's government have also been arrested.

25X1 [] Gandhi was well received on recent trips to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Maharashtra and was organizing her supporters on key Congress Party bodies. Her arrest will now make it

difficult for these supporters to take control of the party on Gandhi's behalf. Congress President Reddy and the party's leader in the parliament, Chavan, have condemned the action but probably feel relieved that a major obstacle to their asserting control over the party has been removed.

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BRAZIL: Protest in Sao Paulo

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[REDACTED] *The Brazilian Government has cracked down on students and the liberal press in Sao Paulo in an effort to deal with an increasing number of protest meetings.*

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[REDACTED] //Thousands of local police, probably under direct orders from President Geisel, recently surrounded all university campuses in Sao Paulo and broke up a meeting called to reactivate a national student group banned in 1968. The police arrested approximately 2,000 students, most of whom have since been released. Despite the massive police operation and continuing surveillance activities, the students have planned a conference in Rio de Janeiro.//

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[REDACTED] A notable aspect of the affair was the open support for the students by the Catholic Church, which conducted an ecumenical mass on the theme of human rights that attracted approximately 6,000 people, mostly students. Cardinal Arns, the Archbishop of Sao Paulo and a strong advocate of human rights in Brazil, had praised the past efforts of the regional army commander to eliminate torture, but there are now signs that their relationship may have cooled. Arns has criticized

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the recent police action, and Catholic lay organizations have indicated that they will continue to support the students.

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[] The government has apparently forced a prominent left-leaning Sao Paulo newspaper to fire its most liberal editors. The publisher of the newspaper--Brazil's most widely circulated daily--reportedly was called to Brasilia two weeks ago and warned by high government officials to get rid of several writers and tone down the newspaper's critical editorial line or face severe reprisals.

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[] Government leaders are also concerned about signs of growing militancy in the large and well-organized metalworkers union in Sao Paulo. So far, there have been no signs of cooperation between the workers and student activists, but dissidence in Sao Paulo is spreading.

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[] Security officials have been warning that violent antigovernment demonstrations, similar to those that erupted in 1968, could occur again. It now appears that President Geisel is also concerned. Although he still seems committed to efforts begun early in his administration to restore some political liberties, he apparently feels compelled to use forceful measures to maintain control and to ensure respect for his authority.

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BRIEF

Rhodesia:

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[] Rhodesian Patriotic Front leader Mugabe's unexplained failure to arrive in Lusaka forced a postponement of his scheduled meeting over the weekend with Joshua Nkomo, his nominal ally in the Front. The two men were to discuss further political integration of their rival ZAPU and ZANU organizations. According to the US Embassy in Lusaka, Mugabe apparently sent word to the advance party of ZANU officials already in Lusaka to return to Maputo.

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